

The Gardener's Maze

by Dot Meharry

illustrated by Ali Teo

Overview

In this humorous narrative, the gardener designs and builds a maze in his garden with help from a friendly hedgehog! This text is a follow-up to *The Gardener* (Yellow) and is a companion text to *The Gardener and the Scarecrow* (Blue). There is a maze activity inside the back cover. Variety in the sentence structures mean that children will need to attend carefully to punctuation to develop phrasing and read fluently. There is an audio version of this text on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong* 2003.

Curriculum links: technology

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the variety of initial consonant blends
- the “all” rime in “all”, “small” and “tall”
- the “silent ‘e’ ” in “made”, “make”, “maze”,
- the verbs ending in “ed”
- the irregular past-tense verbs – “came”, “got”, “grew”, “made”, “put”, “sat”, “saw”, “went”
- the variety of word endings – “garden”, “gardener”, “gardening”, “planting”, “plants”
- the possessive apostrophe in the title
- the use of repetition for effect
- the use of commas to support phrasing
- the variety of sentence beginnings – “At last ...”, “Day after day ...”, “One wet day ...”, “The next day ...”
- the element of fantasy introduced by the cartoon style illustrations and the hedgehog companion
- the humorous ending.

Setting the scene

Tell the children you have another book about the gardener for them to read. They will be familiar with his quirky gardening ideas from *The Gardener*. Find out how much the children know about mazes. Show them a photograph or an example on paper and follow it together. Explain that mazes can also be made of plants or wood and that people go in them for fun. *Have you ever been in one?*

The first reading

Look at the cover of the book. Ask the children to read the title. *Why is the apostrophe there?* Read the names of the author and the illustrator.

Title page – *What is the gardener looking at?*

Page 2 – *Why isn't the gardener out in his garden? What's he doing?* Listen for phrasing and fluency as the children read this page. If necessary, draw their attention to the comma and reread the sentence together.

Listen to the children read the text to themselves, offering support as necessary.

Page 3 – Check that the children understand what a hedge is.

Page 4 – You may need to recall the previous discussion about mazes. *What is this maze made out of?*

Page 5 – *Why is it important to make a plan?* Note that there are several designs.

Page 6 – The children will have to focus on visual information to work out each word on the list because the illustrations are not closely matched to the items. You may need to discuss what the pegs are for.

Page 7 – *What's the first thing you would do?*

Page 9 – *Why is he putting in the pegs?*

Page 10 – *Why would the lines need to be straight?*

Page 11 – If necessary, refer back to the list on page 6 for support.

Page 12 – Talk about the difference between hedge plants and hedges.

Page 13 – Note that the gardener is clipping the hedges to keep them tidy. Refer back to the picture of the maze on page 4.

Page 16 – *Who is the gardener crying out to?* Savour the humorous ending!

Encourage the children to think critically: *How could he have stopped himself from getting lost? Was it a good idea to make a maze?*

Ask the children to help the gardener find his way out of the maze on the inside back cover.

Ideas for revisiting the text

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text to themselves, observing their attention to the print details and punctuation and their ability to read fluently and expressively. If they're not fluent, give them more support by rereading the text with them, modelling expressive reading.

Focus on any initial consonant blends that the children may have been unsure of. Locate examples in the text and make a list of other words that start the same way.

Ask the children to find the words that have "all" in them on pages 11 and 13. Ask the children to create other words by substituting initial letters or consonant blends. Read the list together. Remind the children about the strategy of looking for the biggest familiar chunk they know when faced with unfamiliar words.

List the verbs in the text that end with "ed". Read the list together. Compare these words with some of the irregular verbs. *Would "sitted" sound right?* Draw out the idea that "ed" endings "don't work" for all verbs and that it's helpful if the children call on their knowledge of oral language to support them in their reading.

Focus on the words "made" and "tape". Identify the final "e" common to both words. *The e's "job" is to make the vowel say its name.* Illustrate with "mad" and "made", "tap" and "tape".

Focus on the “er” and “ing” endings in “gardener” and “gardening”. Identify the root word. *What would the word be if we added “s” at the end? Or “ed”?* Repeat the activity with the word “plant”.

Revisit pages 2, 7, and 12. *How do you know when the gardener looked at this gardening book? Went into his garden?* Make a list of the phrases used to indicate time. Display them for the children to use in their own writing.

Work through the book, focusing on the illustrations, especially the role of the hedgehog. *Could this story be true?* Ask the children to comment on the style of the illustrations.

Suggestions for further activities

Enjoy the book and the CD at the listening post.

Read the other books about the gardener.

Find out more about Ali Teo. There is an article about Ali Teo’s illustrations in *School Journal*, Part 2 Number 2, 2002.

Make a flow chart of the design and construction process of making a maze.

Design a maze.

Make a maze out of blocks, then give oral instructions to a partner for how to get through it.